

**NATIONAL DEFENSE UNIVERSITY  
NATIONAL WAR COLLEGE**

**RUMINATIONS OF A NORTH KOREAN GENERAL CONCERNING THE  
UNITED STATES' NATIONAL MILITARY STRATEGY**

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## **RUMINATIONS OF A NORTH KOREAN GENERAL CONCERNING THE UNITED STATES' NATIONAL MILITARY STRATEGY <sup>1</sup>**

I have served my country as a soldier for 36 years, finally reaching one of the highest positions of responsibility. Following my appointment to a five-year term as a National Defense Commission member, I found myself unable to sleep through the night.<sup>2</sup> Again last night, I awoke in a cold sweat from my recurring nightmare of a nuclear holocaust. All Commission members must intimately familiarize themselves with United States' doctrine and policies. The United States' National Military Strategy (USNMS), published in 1997, particularly intrigued me. I could see the obvious strengths and, more importantly, the weaknesses of the imperialistic U.S. military strategy. Despite those USNMS shortcomings, I continued to ponder how my country would survive another day under the incessant pressure from the rest of the world at the bidding of the United States.

U.S. National Security Policy has been to isolate us even further by imposing economic sanctions, pressuring the international community to conform to this

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<sup>1</sup> The thoughts expressed by this North Korean General are hypothetical, but they are based, in part, upon direct contact, discussions and observations the author has had with senior North Korean officials in the past.

<sup>2</sup> Eight major organizations constitute the national command authorities for the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK). The National Defense Commission, consisting of nine commission members, including Kim Jong-Il as chairman, has numerous powers, including: directing all activities of the armed forces and national defense projects; establishing and disbanding central defense institutions, appointing and dismissing senior military officers, conferring military titles and granting titles for top commanders, and declaring a state of war and issuing mobilization orders in an emergency.  
<http://www.fas.org/nuke/guide/dprk/agency/ndc.htm>.

isolationist policy, and engaging China and Russia to assist in restraining our regime.<sup>3</sup> To appear evenhanded, the U.S. has engaged in half-hearted negotiations on several fronts with us related to missile talks, heating oil pursuant to the Agreed Framework, four-party peace talks, and POW-MIA discussions.<sup>4</sup> USNMS is based on their National Security Policy (USNSP). Therein lies the problem with current U.S. policy. Both have demonstrated an apparent lack of overall strategy or focus.<sup>5</sup> The nexus between USNSP and USNMS is important but I only have time to discuss the USNMS. The USNMS is an important document since it describes how the U.S. will prepare to fight us. The USNMS concerns me a great deal because it is fatally flawed, underestimates our motivation and risks conflict. Thus, my nightmares continue. This paper will support my firm belief that the United States National Military Strategy is misdirected and unfocused. More importantly, their strategy fails to adequately understand the motivation of the DPRK and increases the risk of conflict.

War is not something I seek, particularly as a soldier who has walked the length of the DMZ for these many years. I have studied U.S. policies closely to avoid that scenario. The strengths of the USNMS are plain to see, and even worthy of duplication in my country. These include: jointness and unified command concepts, the three-tiered shape/respond/prepare philosophy, and the use of technological superiority in the pursuit of a Nuclear Missile Defense (NMD). In these areas, the U.S. is clearly taking

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<sup>3</sup> James A. Baker III, The Politics of Diplomacy, (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1995) p 595.

<sup>4</sup> The White House issued the latest 'blue book' version of the national security strategy in October 1998, entitled, A National Security Strategy For A New Century. The document lists several steps the DPRK must comply with to reduce tensions on the Korean Peninsula before the U.S. is willing to improve bilateral political and economic ties with the DPRK. Some steps include: compliance with Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty obligations, cessation of chemical and biological weapon programs and ballistic missile proliferation activities, engagement in productive dialogue with South Korea, meaningful participation in the Four Party Talks, and support for U.S. efforts to recover remains of American servicemen missing since the Korean War. p 43.

advantage of its superpower capabilities. Their policies are not without inherent weaknesses, however. The flawed aspects of USNMS are harder to discern but seriously undermine U.S. readiness and, to quote an American phrase, “level the playing field!” U.S. policies change with the political landscape in each new administration. Furthermore, the U.S. is too ambitious, attempting to defend against two major wars as well as every conceivable threat. The U.S. continues to waste valuable resources on non-combat related activities such as peacekeeping and peace enforcement operations. Finally, pursuit of a NMD creates a false sense of security in the U.S. and is potentially destabilizing to the region.

### **STRENGTHS OF U.S. NATIONAL MILITARY STRATEGY**

The U.S. has adroitly pursued several effective approaches in their National Military Strategy. Jointness and unified command structures can potentially optimize the strengths of their services while reducing unnecessary duplication of mission capabilities. The three-phase approach to strategy -- shape/respond/prepare -- is simple in philosophy, yet brilliant when properly executed. A NMD system scares me more than any other U.S. initiative I have heard about. It removes the one card we have to ensure our security. Together, these approaches would guarantee the end of our existence if the U.S. could focus its efforts and not undercut their effectiveness with their hubris to be all things everywhere. Fortunately, the U.S. has not learned how to be a hegemon who knows its limits. I will highlight their weaknesses in a moment, but look at their strengths for a moment.

Joint and unified command structures can place aside inefficient competition among the services and maximize the use of resources. Unity of effort minimizes petty

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<sup>5</sup> Richard L. Armitage, “A Comprehensive Approach to North Korea,” Strategic Forum, Number 159,

Service jealousies and creates better priorities for the entire armed forces. The U.S. military now speaks as one voice to their legislators, making it much harder to manipulate the services when they compete for weapons systems and precious funds. The last fifty years under threat of war have created a survivalist sixth sense in my countrymen. We only seek to satisfy our present needs and seem incapable of long-range thinking about what is best for all our forces. Our senior leaders in each of the services still bicker for everything. The ground forces remain preeminent because they are largest, least expensive, and provide the only advantage we have in any future conflict with our enemies. My old friend, Colonel Choi Joo-Hwai, knew about these problems and betrayed our trust out of frustration.<sup>6</sup> If only I could convince our leaders how much more effective we would be if we could create a similar joint structure with unified commands. The increased efficiency and wiser use of our scarce resources would make us more formidable in the inevitable conflict.

The U.S. could dominate the international landscape by focusing their efforts on their three-tiered philosophy to shape the environment and ensure a peaceful and stable world, responding to crises as they arise, and preparing now for an uncertain future. The last remaining superpower has all the resources to wisely influence key regions to their advantage. In this period of limited U.S. involvement in world conflict, they could prepare for the obvious threats and create effective solutions. I see a true weakness in their strategy, however, through misapplication of these simple precepts. I will explain further, but for now I will simply state that the U.S. assumes far more risk than it needs

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March 1999, p 3.

<sup>6</sup> Colonel Choi Joo-Hwai, a Colonel in the Korean People's Army, defected to the South in 1995. He told a U.S. congressional panel that "If a war breaks out on the Korean Peninsula, the North's main target will be the U.S. forces based in the South and in Japan...Kim Jong Il believes that if North Korea creates more than 20,000 American casualties in the region, the U.S. would roll back and North Korea will win the war." The Salt Lake Tribune, October 22, 1997, at [http://www.sltrib.com/97/oct/102297/nation\\_w/3305.htm](http://www.sltrib.com/97/oct/102297/nation_w/3305.htm).

to. A simple solution would be to limit the scope of their execution of the shape/respond/prepare strategy. For example, they could focus on the obvious threats rather than every conceivable one.

The greatest strength of the USNMS is pursuit of the NMD. No other country can compete technologically with the U.S. We may possess superior perseverance, patience, resourcefulness, and determination, but we lack their resources and technological expertise. Only the U.S. is capable of creating such a barrier to our long-range missile threat. We have always known that the U.S. is capable of amazing technological developments if their national will would support it. Not since World War II, however, has the U.S. demonstrated the necessary national will towards any such endeavor. This is the first time since the end of the Cold War that the U.S. threatened to leap so far ahead of all other countries in development of a particular weapons system. If the U.S. were successful, it would dramatically shift the balance of power in the world. The international concerns with this U.S. initiative reflect not only our fears, but also those of all other countries unable to compete in this area. It is an unsettling proposition and the rest of the world can only hope the U.S. stops this development. We would never concede such an advantage ourselves, but the U.S. is a mentally weak power that repeatedly wilts under international pressure.

These strengths in USNMS pose a great threat to our existence, albeit not insurmountable. If history is any judge of U.S. tendencies, their divisive political systems, economic corporate greed, and overall cultural arrogance will prevent them from capitalizing on these strengths and cause them to fail ultimately to prevent our unification of the Korean Peninsula under the leadership of our great leader, Kim Jong Il.

#### **WEAKNESSES OF U.S. NATIONAL MILITARY STRATEGY**

Inherent weaknesses in the USNMS will undermine U.S. efforts to prevent our unification of the Korean Peninsula. These weaknesses are not immediately recognizable, but can be seen under close scrutiny. The U.S. is a victim of its own weak and inefficient form of government that changes policy and direction with each election. Additionally, the U.S. pursues too broad an agenda, such as full spectrum dominance and an ability to fight two Major Theater Wars (2MTWs) nearly simultaneously. Finally, the greatest risk of a major conflict with the U.S. originates with their haphazard approach towards developing NMD. The U.S. has not demonstrated sufficient technological advancements to stop a missile attack 100%. NMD is a dangerous concept that threatens U.S. coalitions and harbors false U.S. confidences in its ability to provide protection. This could lead to miscalculation and imprudent action by U.S. leaders.

Every new U.S. Presidential administration brings with it new foreign policy goals and initiatives, as if reinventing the wheel. The world has to endure a period of amateurish foreign policy before they get their act together. Any discussions with the current administration will be meaningless for the most part when a new President is elected. We don't have to face that indecisive period under the enlightened leadership of Kim Jong Il. In fact, we often see a new administration as a fresh opportunity to take advantage of their weakened state and secure whatever concessions we can.

Another flaw in USNMS is the U.S. belief in an ability to fight 2MTWs. The U.S. does not have the capability to move sufficient forces to multiple major conflicts simultaneously. Furthermore, we would be idiots not to coincide our main efforts to reunify the Peninsula at the same time the U.S. is engaged elsewhere, such as a major peacekeeping operation. The enemies of the U.S. are automatically our allies. U.S. reliance on commercial shipping and air transport creates a vulnerability that we will



target by whatever means are available. This may have been a valid U.S. strategy during the Cold War, but U.S. forces have subsequently been pared to a hollow force. The U.S. would be hard pressed to respond to a single MTW, much less any other contingencies.

I have to laugh every time I see the U.S. forces used in a peacekeeping or peace enforcing operation. We could not have planned a better waste of their resources. Each of these missions stretches their forces and logistical requirements, lowers morale, and reduces combat effectiveness. This is driving their young officers and enlisted out of the services because it is too hard for their soft lifestyles. Their military becomes more mercenary and less Patriotic everyday. We have no such problems. Our soldiers understand their individual and collective importance and do not shirk from their responsibilities.

The most serious threat posed by the USNMS is the proposed reliance on a NMD system. The concept is unproven and relies on technology not yet in existence. U.S. belief in their invincibility under the NMD umbrella will prompt them to act carelessly, forcing us to act when we are not prepared. Additionally, the NMD is more likely to threaten all coalitions the U.S. is involved in. It does not begin to address the next wave of technological weapons – cruise missiles. This is a prime example of expending enormous assets on one approach to counter only one of many threats. NMD, nonetheless, will force us to expeditiously pursue an ICBM program and to consider restarting several WMD programs. I won't reveal what, if any, WMD programs are already ongoing since the uncertainty favors us and not the U.S.

In an ideal world, the NMD would shield the U.S. from any ballistic missile attack. It would provide enormous technological support to any Theater Missile Defense System. The U.S. proposal, however, is far from an ideal system. I believe we can

defeat such a system with rudimentary measures, including inundating the U.S. with numerous ballistic or cruise missiles. We could also convey WMD in a number of alternate ways that do not involve missile technology. We, of course, would be exposed to a catastrophic response from the U.S., but the continued existence of our homeland may necessitate such drastic measures. U.S. coalition partners have already voiced concerns to the U.S. about what effect this action will have on their relationship and ability to rely on the U.S. We are certainly encouraging those doubts through our public and private statements whenever possible.

A serious flaw in the NMD strategy is the absence of a response to the next wave of technological weapons – cruise missiles. These relatively inexpensive systems are already beginning to appear on the marketplace and provide a potential vehicle for countries such as mine to protect itself from threatening superpowers such as the U.S. In some ways, the U.S. pursuit of a NMD is a waste of resources that might otherwise be used more effectively against us.

Finally, the USNMS pursuit of full spectrum dominance around the world significantly restricts U.S. ability to focus on a specific region, except briefly. Instead of trying to project power to all regions of the world, the U.S. should prioritize regions and create multi-level priorities for each region. Their efforts would be more focused on upper-tier regions such as the Korean Peninsula, Europe, Russia and China. They could use less effort on middle-tier and lower-tier regions. Alternatively, the U.S. could identify what instruments of diplomacy are most effective in specific regions, and focus efforts on developing those instruments within that region. For example, public diplomacy could be the primary instrument of diplomacy in Europe and South & Central America. The military instrument could be the most effective instrument in Asia.

## **CURRENT SITUATION**

I know that Kim Jong Il is tentatively planning a summit this summer in our capital with the President of South Korea, but there is not unanimous support for this gesture within our government. Our military members know only too well that we cannot trust anyone but our own instincts if we are to survive. Everyone is trying to strangle us. We are the only remaining true form of communism. We have learned to survive by guile and successful strategy. We have mastered the national strategy of controlled irrationality as our own tool of statecraft.

We have had our greatest diplomatic success when we have increased tensions through our controlled irrationality strategy. We have forced the U.S. and its puppet governments in South Korea and Japan to take us seriously and agree to our needs by working on WMD programs, engaging in missile tests, sending agents to the South and contesting fishing waters. The oil and food they provided is nothing less than what the world would do for another country experiencing a similar series of natural disasters. Our unpredictability and determination have been our strongest national defense. Years ago, the U.S. and other countries would have left us to our own devices, but now they are afraid of conflict. Since our supporters in Russia and China have stopped helping us, we are undergoing a period of difficulty. We are most vulnerable at this time, so we must appear as dangerous as possible to keep our enemies fearful and willing to compromise.

During my studies in Moscow, I learned that Communism in Russia was far different from our own. Their people had no national identity and failed from within. It was not a true socialist society. We have no such doubts about who we are and what we are fighting for. The U.S. may have had such a national identity following their own Revolution, but that no longer exists.

The U.S. wants to disarm us and place us at its disposal. They have no right to demand that we stop selling weapons to other countries. No one sells more weapons than the U.S. – they are such hypocrites. It is our sovereign right to manufacture weapons to defend our society. These sales are the primary source of currency for us. The international embargo created primarily by the U.S. has prevented our economy from growing. We will never allow ourselves to deal from a position of weakness.

### **CONCLUSION**

I am convinced my nightmares will never cease. The USNMS poses the greatest single threat to the future existence of the Democratic Peoples' Republic of Korea due to its strengths and weaknesses. The U.S. has the ability and resources to prevent our efforts to unify the Korean Peninsula if they would properly apply the principles enunciated in the USNMS. If they would quit wasting their resources on unnecessary operations, diligently follow through on their joint and unified command structures, intelligently apply their three-tiered shape/respond/prepare strategy, and apply sufficient resources to the development of the NMD, the U.S. would be unstoppable. Despite these strengths, the U.S. mindlessly pursues every possible mission in their enlightened hegemony, mistakenly believes in an ability to fight 2 MTWs, and miscalculates their ability to implement a NMD that will be effective. The failings of the USNMS create false U.S confidence, and destabilize the international environment. I hope I am wrong, but I see no way to avoid another inevitable conflict with the U.S. on our current course. The ball, however, is in their court.